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File Code: 3420 **Date:** October 13, 2004
Route To:

Subject: Proposed FY 2005 Forest Health Project, Coyote Ranger District (coyoterd)

To: Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest

On October 7, Dave Conklin of our staff met with Andy Vigil (SFNF Westside silviculturist) and Tony Barela (Coyote RD) to examine portions of the Mesa Poleo project area on the Coyote Ranger District. The main objective of this site visit was to select stand(s) for treatment under our insect and disease prevention/suppression program in FY 2005.

The Mesa Poleo project area is a designated wildland-urban interface (WUI) adjacent to the community of Mesa Poleo, about six miles southwest of Coyote. The District plans to thin about 1200 acres ponderosa pine forest and several hundred acres of woodlands here to reduce fire hazard, improve overall forest conditions, and provide small wood products. Implementation began on some sites during the past year. We briefly visited a ponderosa pine stand where machine mastication and chipping was being conducted by a contractor.

The area selected for an FY 2005 project proposal (approximately 300 acres) is directly adjacent to private land, extending from Forest Road 103 (on the northwest end) to Forest Road 172 (on the southeast end). The forest here is predominantly ponderosa pine, with significant amounts of piñon and juniper in some areas. The pine occurs in three or four distinct age/size classes, from saplings to mature sawtimber. Stocking is highly variable, with overstocked groups and small openings throughout. Site quality is moderate, with an estimated site index of 65 to 70.

This forest appears to have been much more open 80 to 100 years ago, but has gradually filled in with trees. Only one small dwarf mistletoe infection center with four or five lightly infected trees was observed during our walkthrough. A precommercial thinning of the younger trees to about 8 foot spacing was conducted in the late 1970's. It appeared that little or no commercial logging has ever been conducted on the site.

We agreed that thinning of this area would improve the growth and vigor of the better trees, reducing susceptibility to bark beetle attack. Tony indicated that he plans to conduct a viga sale throughout the area to remove intermediate and suppressed trees of merchantable size. Once this small sale is completed, the remaining stand (trees < 9" dbh) would be thinned to an average 20 foot spacing. Spacing would vary (up to 50%) to favor the better dominant and codominant ponderosa pine. We recommend that the thinning be conducted between mid-July and mid-December to reduce the potential for a build-up of *Ips* engraver beetles in the thinning slash.

Please contact us if you have questions about this evaluation or need additional assistance developing a project proposal.

/s/ David A. Conklin (for)
DEBRA ALLEN-REID
New Mexico Zone Leader, Forest Health

cc: Leonard Lucero, John Anhold, Andy Vigil, Francisco B Sanchez